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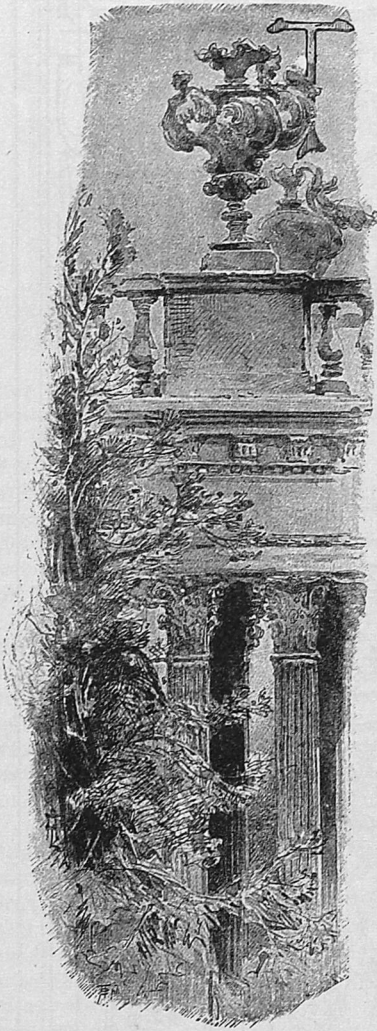
THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

PAINTING ON WOOD.

SECOND PAPER.

BY

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THE first of my papers on the different modes of painting on wood was limited to one process, that of sketching in water colors on panels. This month I should like to initiate the readers of THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER in the quicker process of painting in oils on the same substance. Before quitting the subject of water color designs I must not, however, forget to mention the charming effects obtainable on panel by drawing a tracery of conventional flowers or leaves and tinting them in rich, sober colors in imitation of inlaid wood-work. Looking glasses, small tables, fancy chairs and glove boxes can be ornamented in this way, and have, when accentuated with a dark brown or black outline to the design and subsequently polished, all the appearance of variegated woods. To insure this effect only reds, browns, faded greens and yellows—the tints to be found in natural woods, should be employed. Any purple or blue tones would be out of place, the

colors mentioned being exclusively those seen in marquetry. A scroll pattern of leaves in flamboyant style is the most appropriate for the purpose, though flowers treated conventionally, in a running pattern, may also be employed with success.

Sycamore wood forms the best ground to work on, owing to its fine surface, powdered French chalk or a wash of gelatine dissolved in hot water (as I intimated last month) being a good preparation for the touches of the paint brush.

In like manner a thin wash of glue wonderfully quickens the process of oil painting on wood. Enthusiastic amateurs spend an infinity of pains with little success in this mode of decoration, owing to their ignorance of the very simple methods of preparing the surface of wood for paint. As to a choice of pigments I have recommended water colors for panels for over mantels and cupboards, small tables, fancy boxes, for any thing small in short. Oil colors, on the other hand, have a distinct superiority over the former pigments when any large surface is to be covered. The work is infinitely more rapid, can be corrected and altered at will, and enables the artist to paint directly on the article of furniture he desires to ornament, a thing almost impossible to achieve in the case of the more transparent medium.

A large Louis XV. cupboard, which a friend of the present writer was lucky enough to pick up in Nuremberg, will illustrate exactly what may be done in this style of decoration. To begin with, the piece of furniture was large and roomy, and arranged with shelves in the upper part to hold china and knick-knacks. It was painted cream color inside. Outside the woodwork was stained a delicate azure, or Japanese blue, a tint less green than peacock and deeper than turquoise. The cupboard opened in the centre, the doors running from top to bottom, having glass panels above to show the china within, and wooden ones below which were ornamented with rococo paintings in the style of the middle of the last century.

It could easily be imitated by any enterprising person who has furniture and hangings in the style of Louis XV. and wishes to possess a piece of furniture suitable to an interior, decorated in the luxurious fashion which then obtained. The paintings, which I should describe more fully, were simulated shields (such as are found in heraldic coats of arms), containing landscapes of that conventional order which we are accustomed to see in the eighteenth century. They were rich and glowing in tone, making an agreeable contrast to the cool blue tint of the ground of the cupboard. If this description appears intricate let me hasten to

assure amateurs that the whole design is simplicity itself. To imitate it an easy plan would be to enlarge an heraldic shield to the size of—say a foot or fourteen inches square according to the space the panel affords. Having painted this shield a neutral tint, such as gray if the background of the panel is blue, or fawn color if it should happen to be red, copy the landscape in the centre from an old master, taking care to soften off the edges on to the gray tone of the shield. Remember that the whole painting must be merely decorative. It must be conventional. In such a design it is not a question of representing nature accurately. All that is required is a pleasing suggestion carried out in colors which harmonize with the tints of the panel on which it is limned.

In the case of this quaint old Louis XV. cupboard the whole was merely varnished with a thin layer of fine varnish. In another instance, that namely of a fine sideboard, which although modern is pointed out with pride at the present day in the common room of Pembroke College, Oxford, and which formed part of the famous collection of the late Duke of Buckingham, the woodwork was polished in the manner I have already described in my former paper. It is a piece of furniture so handsome as to more than repay describing.

Built in mahogany, the doors of the fine centre piece and side wings filled with handy draws, were ornamented with wrought brass handles, the whole sideboard being painted with a rich florid design in flowers, leaves and tendrils, while on the top, in the place of honor, a figure subject encircled in twining passion flowers formed the central ornament. The entire design had been painted on the unpolished mahogany, the process of polishing rendering the painting indestructable.

A set of chairs and small tables could be painted in like manner, and would look charming in a drawing-room or boudoir. Almost any of the many reproductions of Chippendale furniture lend themselves to this style of ornamentation, the so-called ribboned back chairs looking extremely pretty when thus decorated with paintings in flowers.

A set of chairs which I saw the other day were ornamented with a charming design of Pompadour roses and forget-me-nots, and looked as fresh and dainty as if they had left the decorator's hands but yesterday. Yet a second glance was enough to convince one that these pretty toys had passed their centenary. Why should we not imitate them? What more dainty handiwork could be devised for a woman with any artistic taste than the ornamentation of her drawing-room furniture in the fashion which prevailed a hundred years ago?

To return to particulars, I may mention that chairs already polished may have the glaze removed in order to receive the artistic decoration suggested, being repolished when finished. In the case of a new set of furniture, it should be ordered from the maker unpolished. As to material a rich rosewood looks best, while as to shape be careful to select a pattern in Chippendale's least florid style. Straight backs and legs lend themselves best to such fanciful floral decorations, a certain severity and simplicity of outline being necessary, as contrast to a piquant style of ornamentation. Apart from a question of taste it is difficult to paint, for instance, on a curved or rounded surface. Chippendale's French style of furniture, therefore, which abounds in curved, scrolled backs and legs should be eschewed, the simple spindle legged and straight backed examples generally associated with his name being more suitable. It is possible to paint such articles of furniture as are here suggested with water colors, only in this case plenty of body color should be employed. It is more airy and transparent than oil, but on this very account likely to be damaged and effaced in the process of French polishing, unless placed in experienced hands.

Having chosen an unpolished rosewood chair, with spindle legs and a straight back, with uprights say an inch or an inch and a half in width, carefully draw or trace the design on the back, front legs, and casing of the seat, and all the woodwork in fact, that requires decorating. A long garland of threaded roses is appropriate for the purpose; the design I have already mentioned—pale pink roses and forget-me-nots, looking especially pretty on the rich, dark ground of rosewood. If oil colors are used a very thin solution of glue may be found useful as a preparation wash, the most transparent colors the palette holds being employed for the manipulation of the floral design. When, as sometimes happens in last century chairs, an oval panel is found in the straight back, nothing is so pretty or so appropriate as a little Boucher or Watteau figure, or a couple of figures sketched in the centre. The most fanciful subjects are permissible.

Such a motif as Reynold's charming picture of "Cupid as a Link Boy" or the master's still more beautiful "Hope Nourishing Love," being suitable designs for the purpose. In some future paper I should like to describe a modern mantel-piece I have lately seen in an artist's house. It was a delightfully spirited design of cupids and roses. In another studio some wonderfully handsome painted paneling (on teak wood) imported bodily from an archbishop's palace on the Loire, and dating from the time of Francis I., deserves fuller notice.